

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1-16. (Canceled)

17. (New) A Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) system for effecting a VoIP call initiated by a VoIP client, comprising:

a plurality of VoIP proxy servers; and

a load balancing proxy server configured to:

receive a request from the VoIP client;

upon receipt of the request from the VoIP client, transmit a request to each of the plurality of VoIP proxy servers;

receive a response from a first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests transmitted by the load balancing proxy server; and

transmit to the VoIP client an identity of the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond as the VoIP proxy server with which the VoIP client should communicate to complete establishment of the VoIP call.

18. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, wherein the request from the VoIP client is a request for the identity of the VoIP proxy server having the lowest workload among the plurality of VoIP proxy servers.

19. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, wherein the requests transmitted by the load balancing proxy server to the VoIP proxy servers are call requests.

20. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, wherein the load balancing proxy server is further configured to cancel the requests transmitted to the remaining VoIP proxy servers upon receipt of the response from the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests.

21. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, wherein the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests is assumed to have the lowest workload of the plurality of VoIP proxy servers.

22. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, wherein the VoIP client, the VoIP proxy servers and the load balancing proxy server interface over a network that includes one or more of: a proprietary network, a network of leased facilities, the Internet, an Intranet, a wide-area-network (WAN), a local-area network (LAN) and a virtual private network (VPN).

23. (New) The VoIP system of claim 17, further comprising a gateway that controls VoIP client access to the load balancing proxy server and the VoIP proxy servers.

24. (New) The VoIP system of claim 23, wherein the gateway is one or more of: a VoIP gateway, a VoIP PSTN gateway, a media gateway, a router and an H.323 gateway.

25. (New) A method of balancing workload in a Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) system having at least one VoIP client, a plurality of VoIP proxy servers and a load balancing proxy server, comprising:

- receiving a request from the VoIP client with the load balancing proxy server;
- upon receipt of the request from the VoIP client, the load balancing proxy server transmitting a request to each of the plurality of VoIP proxy servers;
- receiving a response with the load balancing proxy server from a first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests transmitted by the load balancing proxy server; and

transmitting an identity of the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond from the load balancing proxy server to the VoIP client as the VoIP proxy server with which the VoIP client should communicate to complete establishment of a VoIP call.

26. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the request from the VoIP client is a request for the identity of the VoIP proxy server having the lowest workload among the plurality of VoIP proxy servers.

27. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the requests transmitted by the load balancing proxy server to the VoIP proxy servers are call requests.

28. (New) The method of claim 25, further comprising, upon receipt of the identity of the VoIP proxy server with the VoIP client, the VoIP client communicating with the identified VoIP proxy server to establish the VoIP call.

29. (New) The method of claim 25, further comprising, upon receipt of the response from the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests, the load balancing proxy server cancelling the requests transmitted to the remaining VoIP proxy servers.

30. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the first one of the VoIP proxy servers to respond to the requests is assumed to have the lowest workload of the plurality of VoIP proxy servers.